

# Media as a Tool for Forming the President's Image (On the Example of the 2019 Election Process)

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**Abstract:** The article deals with notion of the a politician image, in particular the president, as well as the tools of forming it through the media in Ukraine using the example of the president's elections 2019. His benevolent attitude and increasing confidence of Ukrainians in his activities and extrapolated them to the events of 2019. The article deals with the technology of comparative analysis of portrait representation on television and Internet portals of influential Ukrainian media. The authors selected powerful Ukrainian television media, such as 1 + 1 (TSN), ICTV (Facts), Channel 5 (news), STB (News windows), 112 (news112) for the study. On each TV channel and site, the content not only contributed to the formation of a portrait of the president, but gave his own attitude to it. A pilot sociological research has been conducted by the authors revealed the level of Ukrainians' confidence in the newly elected President of Ukraine. The survey covered the period from the 1-st of April till the 5-th of July 5, 2019. The survey was conducted from the 11-th till the 17-th of June 2019. A total of 1,100 recipients participated in the survey.

**Keywords:** presidential image, media, image forming tools, image communication, confidence level, television media.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A fundamentally new person came to power in Ukraine, who has not previously engaged in politics before to 2019. He was not involved in power or corruption mechanisms, is not involved in scandals and political deception of Ukrainians. This gave to the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky a powerful wave of confidence from the nation and came to power with a 73.22% advantage. Given that the overwhelming majority of the media involved in Ukraine, the question of creation of the president's image and portrait by oligarchic structures and media is still actual.

It is also clear that attention to issues of language communication, the latest and current principles of modeling the act of communication, tools for image formation in the field of public activity is steadily increasing. Scientists are developing and political technologists are introducing,

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conceptually new approaches to the essence of the image of the power representative.

The image of political leader is image deliberately formed in the society imagination and it emerges over a period of time, through the deliberate efforts of political technologists.

Political image includes representations, perceptions, some beliefs about social and political phenomena promoted by a person or a party. And such image is formed both on the basis of real behavior of the person and under the influence of the evaluations of others. The President's image of Ukraine V. Zelensky began to emerge with the appearance on the screens of the TV series "People's servant" in the November in 2015. During the 2019 elections, the majority of the population of Ukraine identified the presidential candidate with the hero of the TV series. The bright image of the president as a movie hero was remembered. It had been formed very good, it was decisive victory in the election.

The image of the party leader is associated with the image of the whole party, which determined the overwhelming victory of the presidential party "People's Servant" in the July 2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Often focuses had not made program, but on the personal qualities of the candidate.

1.1. **The aim of** the article is to outline the tools of image creation of the President of Ukraine by mass media.

### **The mail tasks:**

- studied and described the existing tools for image illumination of the President of Ukraine;
- conducted a comparative analysis of the presentation of the President's portrait by media.
- conducted a pilot sociological research that revealed the level of Ukrainians' trust in the newly elected President of Ukraine.

## II. THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL

The descriptive method was implemented to systematically identify the units of coverage of a positive image in the media of the President of Ukraine and to explain the peculiarities of their implementation. The method necessitated the allocation of appropriate units of analysis; membership of distinguished theoretical units of image formation; interpretation of theoretical material to practical during the study of illumination of the image of V. Zelensky.

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A comparative analysis was carried out to identify and search for and determine the necessary features and properties, special characteristics on the image of the president, which took place on the basis of the collected statistical data: For example, for possibilities to empirical aspect of the study of the coverage of the image of V. Zelensky by Ukrainian sites of powerful television media such as 1 + 1 (TSN), ICTV (Facts), Channel 5 (News), STB (News Window), 112 (News112).

The method of sociological survey was used to study the image of the president in the eyes of Ukrainians and to study the characteristics of V. Zelensky's activity, reaction and attitude of Ukrainians. We interviewed 1,100 Ukrainians through the network. This figure gives grounds for objective conclusions. Covered from April the 1-st till 5-th of July in 2019, the survey was conducted from the 11-th till the 17-th of June 2019

Monitoring of traditional media sites (1 + 1 (TSN), ICTV (Facts), Channel 5 (news), STB (News windows), 112 (news112)) and coverage of news on them related to the results of the President of Ukraine to find relevant information in site materials (publications and stories) that were relevant and relevant to the research topic.

Giving these issues it is important to take a fresh approach to exploring existing tools to develop rules for developing a positive image of a politician, developing a friendly attitude and trusting Ukrainians, their willingness to cooperate and so on.

The issue of image formation has always been debatable. Practitioners and scientists discuss the issues of actual mechanisms of formation of personality image. But at the same time, the attention of scientists is focused on a set of tools that must be used to create a positive image and their real effectiveness.

K. Sharlamanov and A. Jovanoski argue that the basis of the image of politics is trust, which builds on the experience, competence and honesty of the politician Sharlamanov K., Jovanoski F. [9]. This thesis was completely destroyed by the presidential campaign in Ukraine in 2019. The presidential candidate lacked experience and competencies, and there was no program according to which voters could track the promise.

The second thesis «When it comes to feelings that should be caused by the candidate image, on one hand it should cause closeness, relatedness to his voters who should feel this person as a popular man, someone they would like to drink coffee or beer with, and on the other hand it should cause respect for the audience. The successful political image in the heads of the audience should cause feeling that the candidate is one of the audiences...» is fully in line with Ukrainian realities. The president made everyone feel that he was one of them, his exclamation: "The president is now every one of you" gained popularity.

Gackowski T. University of Warsaw analyzed the commitments made by D. Tusk and their 100-day implementation: «What counts are the visions, hopes, dreams, desires, just the image (picture perfect, masking defects, emphasizing the benefits), rather than facts, figures, statements and an electoral programmes. This seems to be one of the most important communication barriers in politics and in the present era of post-politics» [4].

Canadian scientists Lalancette M., Raynauld V. believes that specific qualities such as honesty, intelligence,

benevolence, sincerity and reliability play a big role in electoral decisions. And image management practices give the impression that politicians have these qualities [5]

Ukrainian scientists consider media to be an important lever for image formation. For example, G. Pocheptsov defined image as «...a means of communication that connects a politician with his audience. Drawing on this important feature of the image, the author defines it as a "reflection" of the interests of the audience and the politician and "tries to combine these interests, to escape from the unilateral pressure from above inherent in a totalitarian society» [8]

A fundamentally new concept of forming the image of a leader has been described by the Ukrainian S. Denisyuk. He had been based on the modern political-psychological approach, dialectical method, and historical method. All this made it possible to conclude that two mechanisms of forming the image of the politician are relevant today: "image-artifact, which is connected with technological methods of its formation, and image-force-majeure, which is the result of situational formation of ideas about the political leader regarding it. The personal position on a particular social situation that most voters can share » [3]

An important instrument for illuminating the image is the media, which are demonstrate the most powerful informants in the world. They are who set a certain vision in the nation's consciousness of certain concepts. Brian McNeill points out in this regard: «The media ...Which brings us to the third element in the political communication process – media organisations, which today comprise print, broadcasting and online channels» [6]

The author further notes at the expense of political leaders that media should be used as communication channels: political actors must use the media in order to have their messages communicated to the desired audience. Political programmes, policy statements, electoral appeals, pressure group campaigns, and acts of terrorism have a political existence – and potential for communicative effectiveness – only to the extent that they are reported and received as messages by the media audience.

A lot of aspects of formation image emerge as a communication unit between the president and the audience. It is uniquely conditioned by the influence of the media.

The concept of "image" borrowed from political science in economics, was considered in the 1960s by David Ogilvie in the substantiation of the theory of product image, for the realization of which requires not only information about functional qualities, but also about attractive details for the audience, only in a positive way David Ogilvy [7].

The image of the subject of politics consist of a part the political image, is purposefully formed by propaganda, fashion, prejudices, traditions in order to stimulate the necessary reactions, to exert emotional and psychological influence on people. Political image is generalized and simplified information about the real and imagined features of the political consciousness and behavior of the organization or individual.

The general characteristics of the image depend not only on the individual himself, but more the values, norms, traditions of society, his political system. The political image determines the nature of the further perception of the object by the persons who have acquired it; captures a stable

attitude towards the subject; is the basis for the subjective choice of an adequate model of behavior. As a theoretical unit, the image is formed from two fundamental components in interaction with the public and traditional media.

First of all, these are components that include appearance, shape and style of clothing, verbal and non-verbal behavioral aspects. Second, systematic interaction, performance is communication with the audience through the media. The impression the president creates is psychologically fundamental for Ukrainians. It is not surprising that the problematic aspect is the peculiarities of verbal and non-verbal behavior as a component of image formation.

Image communication, which occurs through the media, covers the social interaction of different social strata and the president, highlights its activities that directly affect the standard of living of the population. Important here is the orderliness of illuminated information resources related to V. Zelensky, who can be achieved by observing the rules and norms that make adjustments to the nature of communication in accordance with the stated purpose and the means outlined.

In political practice, the following types of image of political leaders have been established:

- 1) leaders, leaders who define for their supporter's goals, directions of activity, lead, are characterized by a coherent, personalized own vision of reality, bright, attractive personality traits;
- 2) salespeople (servants) who are attentive to people, seek to help them, convince them that they can solve their problems;
- 3) puppet leaders ("gendarmes") who persuade people in various ways to "buy" their sympathies and actions;
- 4) fire leaders whose actions depend on the urgent requirements of the political situation.

Political image is a kind of reflection of the public perception of the ideal embodiment of a social role, a set of statements and perceptions of voters about the leader through generalizations and emotional experiences.

The image of the president is the most often characterized by his appearance, manner of communication, style of public speaking, characteristic features of behavior, biography, degree of desire for power. Equally important are the structural parameters of the image of the politician: ideological type (political position); personality traits; social roles (social status, social origin); a nickname, a nickname.

The functional parameters are also essential: language (vocabulary, style, utterance); external attributes (clothing, hairstyle, glasses, car, etc.); non-verbal communication (facial expressions, pantomime, gesture), etc. The president's speeches, the promises he makes in his speeches, are the calling card of the "servant of the people," who cares about the welfare of the nation without fear of being condemned by oligarchic clans and misrepresenting their actions through traditional media coverage. It is necessary to determine what political image is as a theoretical unit for the further explore the issues raised.

This classification is based on the fact that at the psychological level the image of the politician corresponds to the historically formed symbolic structures with which they associate values of value to certain communities. Each of the archetypes is differently perceived and evaluated by the voters, shaping their respective expectations. They differently encourage the voter to participate in political action.

The combination of social characteristics and psychological archetypes is the basis for the formation of an image that must be natural, beneficial to the politician, consistent with his character, profession, temperament, external data. The basic premise of archetype work is the inclusion of symbols and structures of human thinking. The image should be based on three or four characteristics that form a single structure of the politician's personality, designed to provide him with a unique political image.

A political image of the defender of the weak and disadvantaged was chosen for President Zelensky; a talented organizer; a person close to the people who understands all the problems. It was this image that was shown in the movie "People's servant" and spread by the media.

Creating a common political image of the president is shaped by several stages, where specific instruments are relevant.

For example, during the election campaign V. Zelensky and his team did not appeal to their opponents, but to all citizens through video appeals, in which one postulate was emotionally stated. It is worth considering in more detail some of them that we saw in the analysis of the Ukrainian media space.

Studying ways of forming the image of the president should be emphasized that mostly the citizen shows confidence not paying attention to rational or analysis of the published data, but concludes based on the complex of impressions that were obtained through audio-visual perception.

We have chosen news outlets that covered President Vladimir Zelensky's activities and levels of interpretation, depending on media owners, their information vectors and more. Among the Ukrainian TV channels, according to the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting, on the 12-th of July 2019 the most rated are: 1 + 1, Ukraine, ICTV, STB, Novyj Kanal; among the information channels, viewers prefer 112, Newsone, Direct, Espresso, 24 channel. The measurements were conducted by Big data rating throughout Ukraine with 359700 respondents.

We selected 1 + 1 (TSN), ICTV (Facts), STB (News windows), Channel 5 (news), 112 (News112) for the study. These are the largest and most powerful mass media of Ukraine, which have a strong influence on illuminating the image of the president, which dictates the parameters of his perception in the mass consciousness.

We take advantage of the isolated stages of image formation for the projection of the 2019 presidential campaign: «The first stage is the collection and analysis of information. At this stage, information is collected on the basis of which the image will be built. The data are classified into the following categories: natural qualities, acquired qualities, social characteristics, political characteristics, and sociological research data. The second stage is the construction of the image. Designing the image is carried out in several directions: external attractiveness, communicative mechanics, and business rhetoric. The third stage is the adaptation of the candidate to the image. The fourth stage is a test on the electorate. This stage is carried out in two steps: the first is mediator approbation, and the second is a personal approbation when a politic has a new role. The fifth stage is the analysis of information about the image (the collection and



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systematization of information). The sixth stage is image correction» [1]. It is statistically proved that the selection of information resources by the Ukrainians is irrational, based on archetypes, national character and before the 2019 elections.

This approach was implemented in political vectors in particular. Now Ukraine has difficult situation with uncertain political system and existing values, the leading tool is the formation of image taking into account the technological capabilities of the media. «Today, there are two cultures in parallel, two systems of assessment, which manifests in the destabilization of society and affects the choice of a politician who is able to meet the urgent needs of the population, all because in Ukraine the political process and electoral culture are not fully formed» [3]. But it should be emphasized that the political system itself is undergoing restructuring. So it is difficult to define clear tools for shaping the president's image through the media. Therefore, the analysis of existing ones is based on hypotheses, but not on fundamental postulates.

At the same time, we believe it is necessary to distinguish technologies and tools of forming the image of politics through the traditional media. The process of shaping the president's image is complex and two-sided. This is due to the fact that the president is elected by the nation, that is, he is a leader, and on the other hand, he is a voter because he has the same voting rights. The presidential election process is covered through the media as a mediator.

They publish information that is of public importance and influence public opinion. On the basis of the information received from the citizens, an opinion is formed about the activity of the government, the parliament, parties and other political institutions, about the economic, cultural and other life of society. The Ukrainian experience in recent months has shown the enormous power of the media influence and especially TV on the minds of ordinary voters.

Based on the research of world psychology, one important tool for forming the image of the president should be distinguished information that is always presented about him is audio-visual, which is more effective than printed. That is one of the technologies for building the image of Vladimir Zelensky was indirect advertising, because the Ukrainians knew him as a successful showman, an actor who played in the film of the president, who came out of the "gray masses" and would do everything for the benefit of the people. He was not involved in politics, which means that he is not "clean" from the lie for many voters.

Indirect advertising became effective and effective in forming V. Zelensky's portrait as a candidate.

Another tool was the direct political advertising of the future president, which took place on all the channels we are investigating. The commercials were simple enough, but also informative, and most importantly, in style, they did not look like the other candidates' videos: truthful, mobile, selfie-style. Another clip portrayed the future president as a person who knows in advance that his political career will be difficult.

Media became an intermediary for conducting basic image themes that set the tone for the general public sentiment and the course of V. Zelensky's political campaign itself.

Another tool for shaping the image was the promotion of print media featuring V. Zelensky. Unlike other candidates. There were not many.

They became leaflets and thin brochures with the advertising political slogans of the President's Party of

Servant Party. The use of minimal print production (since the vast majority of advertising was distributed on the Internet and social media), made it possible to build the image of the candidate as open and direct for compatriots. That is the tool for building direct communication technologies worked here the future president is ready to communicate freely and openly with his people, because he is a native of it. This was the shortest way to make friendly contact.

The fourth tool that today plays an active role in the president's work and influences the building of a successful image is the calm, open gestures and facial expressions of V. Zelensky, which outline readiness for dialogue. On television screens, he appeared always smiling, active, active, and busy, that is, who left the show-man's activities in the past and conscientiously fulfills the duties of the President of the state. Ukrainians see a serious figure that is ready not only to communicate but to fight for the rights of everyone.

Actively using the Internet in his activity, V. Zelensky illuminates events and prospects through videos on YouTube, thus breaking the wall between the people and the president, systematically responding to the audience.

The next tool is a representation of a real activity that is highlighted and commented differently in the information field. Monitoring of news sites of channels 1 + 1 (TSN), ICTV (Facts), Channel 5 (news), STB (News windows), 112 (news112) gives grounds to claim that each of the sites represents the president, showing not only his portrait, but and influences his attitude.

So, having analyzed the covered materials on the websites of TV channels, it is necessary to distinguish the tools for forming the image of President V. Zelensky:

- illumination of appearance and intellectual qualities;
- positioning of the leader's personality (his ideological-political and programmatic-practical positions);
- emphasis on professionalism and patriotism;
- regular rating reports.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The formation of the image of the politician is a multifaceted concept, which is an integral part of public life, significantly influences the political institutions, life of Ukraine as a whole. As a result, Zelensky's image has positioned him as a person capable of decisively influencing the current political processes in the country.

In the post-election political process, when the president exercises his powers, PR technologies remain the leading means of shaping his image. It should be noted that the image of the president is a series of image characteristics aimed at the systems of facts about him, which will directly form the impression of the masses about him. For example, these are facts from the past, individual characteristics of a politician, his or her activity in solving social problems, etc.

What is important for our study is the way the newly elected president sees Ukrainians. We conducted a pilot sociological survey in which respondents were asked a questionnaire on five closed questions (Table-I). The survey involved 1100 people. The poll was conducted from June 11-17, when the first steps of V. Zelensky as president were taken.



**Table- I: Evaluation of President Zelensky's activity in the first month of cadence\* (statistics for June 11-17)**

No	Question	Yes	No
1	Do you consider V. Zelensky's policy effective today?	76%	23%
2	According to your opinion, is the president changing the heads of the main state structures correctly?	87,5%	12,5%
3	Do you think there is a need for early parliamentary elections to be held due to the dissolution of Parliament by the President?	94%	6%
4	In your opinion, do you need such radical activity for presidents?	82,8%	17,2
5	According to your opinion, will V. Zelensky cope with the work outlined in the election campaign?	77,6%	22,4%

\*by the authors

So, as seen from the poll, the expectations and level of voter confidence for June 17, 2019 is quite high. This is explained by the well-formed image of the president, which Ukrainian media brought to the audience during the election period.

From the poll, it follows that the tools of forming the image of the president are directly related to the actions taken in connection with the promises made during the election campaign. It should be emphasized that V. Zelensky was the only candidate who did not make any promises to the voters, but outlined only the overall strategy. The peculiarity of forming the image of the president was that he was formed in the media during the total decline of values, but taking into account the latest approach to electoral technologies.

The process of forming the president's image was carried out taking into account the neglect of the parameters of manipulation of the public consciousness, that is, the audience is already largely unresponsive to the provocative reproaches of the opponents of the president, which provoked a powerful credit of trust in him.

Our research has prospects for development: we see the point of exploring changes in the image of the president compared to the election and the attitude of people to the expected and achieved results.

Problematic is the way of the study of the image of the President of Ukraine taking into account the tendency that the image itself as a theoretical unit is not able to portray the policy completely, but outlines only the optimal image chosen, which becomes appropriate in a certain socio-political situation. Its main functions are displayed through the media, are to win voters' trust and systematically increase its level of activity. In such a case, the media as a platform contributes to improving the awareness of Ukrainians in a vector that is favorable to the politician. Clearly objectivity remains a problem for Ukraine.

A separate category here will be the tool of neutralizing the opponent, which also happens through the lens of media coverage and the angle of the politician there. That is, it is about the level and quality of the image of the politician in terms of his personal characteristics. The fundamental lever here is the reflection of the social parameters of its activities, symbolic load. All this, in aggregate, influences the general process of forming the image of the president, which is still gradually and unevenly constructed in the minds of Ukrainians.

The image of the Ukrainian politician is outlined by his personality. Here it is important at what angle it will be presented by the domestic media, exactly how they will cover the events related to the presidential activities that will determine the history of the country. Therefore, the image of power that shapes the image of a leader remains problematic for Ukraine today.

It is worth noting that one of the leading tools of image formation for presidents through the media is direct communication, which has a very specific effect on individuals. "Political language influences the senses rather than the mind, and can lead to certain behaviors. The problem of learning political communication tools is an important constructive image [2]. It is prudent to study the concept of the president's image strategy, which ideally should reflect his stage indicators and socio-psychological characteristics that Ukrainians seek to demonstrate.

We can see a trend of spreading the image of the politician, which represents the positive image characteristics of the President, who are systematically increasing, while their systematic positive connotation in the media. The question of the optimal image of the politician remains debatable. There is a contradiction as to what traits he must possess to meet the demands of all voters and to be as consistent as possible with the image of an ideal leader.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The tools for shaping the president's image are mostly implemented through media coverage. This process is complex, multifaceted and based on systematic communication between the audience and the President.

During the study, we made a description of the tools to cover the image of the President of Ukraine. It is a complex and multifaceted process based on a high wave of trust in V. Zelensky by Ukrainians. The tools of image building are not only communication in the media, but emphasizing serious intentions to fundamentally change the country, change the ruling elite and achieve a high standard of living for the country.

Image formation as a permanent unit is formed in the process of close interaction of the public and traditional media. It is necessary to properly cover the media image of V. Zelensky in terms of appearance, manner of communication, style of public speaking, behavioral and peculiarities and the level of abuse of power, etc.

We conducted a comparative analysis of the representation of the President's portrait in the media. The materials of the sites of powerful Ukrainian MEDIA were monitored: 1 + 1 (TSN), ICTV (Facts), Channel 5 (news), STB (News windows), 112 (news112), which form a portrait of the President through the lens of illuminated materials and previous advertising technologies, that were made public during the election campaign.

This made it possible to demonstrate that every media outlet has different coverage of the president and his level of activity. Due to this, a portrait of V. Zelensky is built up in the media in different ways. It is explained by the fact that nowadays powerful media belong to different oligarchic structures and cover the "truth" that they need directly. Such involvement hinders the democratic existence of the



domestic media and the objective coverage of the activities of the presidential team and him.

In order to obtain unbiased information about the real attitude of Ukrainians to V. Zelensky as president, we conducted a pilot sociological survey that revealed the level of trust of Ukrainians in the newly elected president of Ukraine. Thus, the image of politics depends directly on how it is presented in the media, what features it is given by certain channels, which characteristics are given more attention. At present, the image of the President of Ukraine V. Zelensky is built on the basis of a toolkit of trust and portraits of his own among others, that is, he is a native of the people, which determines the high level of confidence in his activity.

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